



Department of Governance

Meeting Number APC15/1

**Confirmed****ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE****Minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2015**

**PRESENT:** Dr L. Amrane-Cooper, Mrs M. Henaghan, Professor T. Hilton, Ms J. Main, Mr V. McKay, Mr R. Ruthven, Dr S. Rate, Dr M. Sharp, Mr M. Stephenson, Professor B. Steves, Mr I. Stewart, Professor V. Webster (Chair), Professor R Whittaker

**APOLOGIES:** Mr N. Alexander, Professor I. Cameron, Ms S. McGiffen, Dr N. McLarnon,

**BY INVITATION:** Dr N. Andrew, Ms D. Donnet, Mr S. Lopez

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr P. Woods (Secretary)

**OPENING REMARKS**

15.001 Reported By the Chair that due to the number of late papers received for this and the previous meeting of APC it was necessary to reinforce the requirement to deliver any relevant items on time and in an appropriate format.

15.002 Resolved That papers are notified and delivered 2 weeks ahead of a meeting to allow circulation of the agenda one week before a meeting.

**MINUTES**

15.003 Considered The minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2015 (APC14/92/1).

15.004 Resolved That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

**MATTERS ARISING**

African Leadership Unleashed (*Arising on 14.190*)

15.005 Reported By the Chair that there would be an announcement in due course by the Principal in relation to this development.

GCU New York (*Arising on 14.197*)

15.006 Reported By the Chair that there will be further contextual exceptions coming

forward from GCU New York, specifically the ratification of marks per trimester which is a requirement under US student financial aid regulations. The African Leadership arrangements may require similar contextualisation.

#### Assessment Regulations (*Arising on 14.210*)

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| 15.007 | Reported | By the Chair that there was a need to revisit the mechanism for ongoing regulatory updates and to consider if the Assessment Regulations Working Group is required in its current designation. |
| 15.008 | Reported | By Mr Lopez that more generally there was a need to publish any updated regulations earlier in advance of implementation in order to avoid any potential disadvantage to students.             |

#### **CRITERION OF A TEACHING TIMETABLING AND ROOM BOOKING POLICY**

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| 15.009 | Considered | Criterion of a Teaching Timetabling and Room Booking Policy ( <b>APC15/9/1</b> ).                                       |
| 15.010 | Reported   | By Mr Lopez that there was no current policy and the University do not currently publish individual student timetables. |

Relevant constraints had been identified, such as staff availability, room availability and capacity, and would feed into the timetabling matrix. He asked members to note that teaching hours were specified as 9am to 6 pm (Monday to Thursday) which is not current practice at GCU but is normal practice in the HE sector<sup>1</sup>.

There has been an attempt to preserve free Wednesday afternoons as far as possible but due to estates limitations, 1.8% of classes is likely to be allocated to Wednesday afternoons.

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| 15.011 | Discussion | Members were generally supportive of the proposals. It was also recognised that some of the implications of the proposed arrangements represented a major culture shift for the University meaning, for example, that the programme approval process would have to conclude by March of each year. |
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One member questioned if the compression of the programme approval process would limit agility for commercial arrangements for tailored programme provision. It was not, however, thought that these criteria would affect to that type of arrangement.

Some members commented that the proposals would be beneficial to students particularly those with caring commitments. Timetables, where students teaching sessions were not scattered across the week were also a potential benefit.

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<sup>1</sup> Secretary's note: Teaching hours of 9am -6pm were approved as part of the Academic Calendar Review proposals presented to Senate on 15 March 2015.

Members asked if all “hard” constraints were definitely required. Mr Lopez replied that constraints identified as “hard” were required to eliminate clashes. “Soft” constraints could be looked at again once an initial timetable is created.

15.012 Resolved The base criteria to be used in a the Draft Timetable and Room Booking Policy be approved. (**Academic Registrar**)

#### **REPORT ON NULLIFICATION OF MODULE**

15.013 Considered A report on the nullification of the module Rich Internet Applications (MHG412774) for the BSc Computer and Electronic Systems Engineering Programme (Levels 3 and 4) (APC15/7/1).

15.014 Reported By the Chair that the report would now be taken to Senate. She asked if members wished to comment.

15.015 Discussion Mr Stewart stated that the module composition of programmes was being reviewed and no other substitutions of this type had been identified so far.

Mrs Henaghan stated that the process had been useful in some ways and would inform updates to the Quality Enhancement Handbook and potentially the Assessment Regulations. She also asked if there was merit at this stage in considering the introduction of a subject area board/programme assessment board system.

The Chair stated that there was a need to consider the operation of Assessment Boards in a wider context and review their operation more generally.

15.016 Resolved That the report is approved and recommended to Senate (**Governance**).

#### **REVIEW OF CURRENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE IN RELATION TO PROGRAMME CHANGES AND WITHDRAWALS**

15.017 Considered A verbal notification of the intention to review elements of current policy and procedure in relation to Academic Programme changes and withdrawals.

15.018 Reported By the Chair that the discussion on timetabling had highlighted the need to implement changes in a timely manner and similarly to comply with contractual requirements under consumer protection law.

15.019 Resolved That members note that any proposed changes should be discussed with Quality Office in the first instance (**Schools – ADLTQs/Deans**).

#### **CCE OMAN PHASING OF ASSESSMENT REGULATION CHANGES**

15.020 Considered A report detailing a phased timetable of regulatory changes at CCE Oman as a consequence of Oman Ministry of Higher Education instructions (APC15/10/1).

- 15.021      Reported      By Mr Stewart that CEEO whilst being subject to the Regulatory framework of GCU was also subject to the regulations of the Oman Ministry of Higher Education. The Ministry required that major changes to regulations are phased in and apply only to new intakes from the point of change. This was not intended as an exception to the Assessment Regulations as the current regulations will apply to intakes from the point of implementation (2014-15) and the previous regulations, specified as major changes, will phase out as the pre 2014-15 cohorts complete. The specific regulations to be phased were:
1. The duration of studies and the number of resits permitted for undergraduate students.
  2. The Module pass criteria for Taught Postgraduate Programmes (MSc Maintenance Management part-time programme only).
- 15.022      Resolved      That the phased approach to Assessment Regulation changes at CEEO be approved (**SEBE/CEE0**).

**CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT – STUDENT REPRESENTATION ON APPEAL COMMITTEE OF UNIVERSITY COURT**

- 15.023      Considered      The issue of possible additional student representation on the Appeal Committee of University Court in future (APC15/8/1).
- 15.024      Reported      By Ms Donnet that when the Code was originally approved Senate required that APC considered further student representation on the Appeal Committee of University Court. As there is now an appropriately trained pool of student representatives and it is proposed that the composition is updated to include this group as Student President nominees.
- 15.025      Resolved      That the change to the Appeal Committee of University Court composition be approved (**Governance**).

**PROPOSED CHANGE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REGULATIONS**

- 15.026      Considered      A proposed modification to the Regulations for the Appointment and Responsibilities of External Examiners (APC15/6/1).
- 15.027      Reported      By the Secretary that the proposal had arisen from the discrepancy between undergraduate and taught postgraduate regulations which had been highlighted by a formal complaint.
- 15.028      Discussion      Some members expressed the view that there should be a formalised process for dealing with changes and/or enhancements arising from formal complaints.
- In relation the specific issue of attendance of external examiners, there was a discrepancy in relation to undergraduate and postgraduate practice

to be resolved. Members also thought that there were straightforward solutions to virtual attendance that could be explored where applicable.

15.029 Resolved That there is further discussion on the final form of words to be included in the modification (**Quality Enhancement/Governance**).

#### **STRATEGY FOR LEARNING OPERATIONAL PLAN**

15.030 Considered Development of Strategy for Learning Operational plan 2015/16 (APC15/4/1).

Reported By Professor Whittaker that following the refresh of the Strategy for Learning this paper presented a range of options for developing an operational plan based on agreed priorities. She invited members to comment on the options set out in the paper.

15.031 Discussion Members welcomed the lighter touch approach and there was general agreement that 2 or 3 priorities would be appropriate.

15.032 Resolved That option 3 is preferred: *Focus on key learning and teaching development and enablers as priority areas* with further consultation with Schools on key priority areas (**Director GCU Lead**).

#### **ENGAGE**

15.033 Considered A GCU Student Engagement Update Report (APC15/5/1).

15.034 Reported By Dr Andrew that the project aimed to mainstream student engagement across the University. There were a number of recommendations related to this:

1. To support mainstreaming of Student Engagement across Schools and Departments to embed and sustain participation and partnership within core academic activity and professional functions.
2. Use the emerging Student Engagement infrastructure and model to support the delivery and enhancement of GCU learning, teaching and quality enhancement priorities through:
  - Integration of Student Engagement within current GCU priorities such as the Common Good Curriculum linked to the shared values of Integrity; Creativity; Responsibility; and Confidence and supporting the development of common good attributes.
  - Support for and promotion of student participation in academic quality enhancement in line with the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, the SFC and ongoing sector development around the Teaching Excellence Framework.

She invited comments from members.

15.035 Discussion Members welcomed the report. In general members felt that there were pockets of good practice but there was also inconsistency that required to be improved on.

15.036 Resolved That the Committee endorses the report and its recommendations.

#### **ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE, COMPOSITION AND MEMBERSHIP 2015-16**

15.037 Considered The Terms of Reference and Composition and Membership 2015-16 (APC15/2/1).

15.038 Resolved

1. That the Terms of Reference be approved.
2. That the Composition be approved in principle and recommendations for additions are brought back to the next meeting. (**Committee Secretary**)

#### **ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT**

15.039 Considered The Academic Policy Committee Annual Report (APC15/3/1).

15.040 Resolved That members feedback any comments to the Secretary before submission to Senate. (**APC members**)

#### **LEARNING AND TEACHING SUBCOMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT**

15.041 Considered The Learning and Teaching Subcommittee Annual Report (LTSC15/19/2 – to follow).

15.042 Resolved That members feedback any comments to the Secretary before submission to Senate. (**APC members**)

#### **SEBE – CONCEPT PAPER/ACADEMIC CASE**

15.043 Considered A concept paper/academic case for a programme MSc Big Data Technologies (APC15/1/1).

15.044 Discussion Members were unclear as to whether the paper was a concept paper or an academic case or both. In view of this it was felt that both clarification and reformatting were required.

15.045 Resolved That the paperwork is reviewed and the academic case is represented to the next meeting. (**ADLTQ –SEBE**)

#### **SEBE – CHANGE OF PROGRAMME TITLE**

15.046 Considered A proposal to change the programme title BSc Digital Design (3D Animation & Visualisation) to BSc/BSc(Hons) 3D Animation and Visualisation (APC15/12/1).

15.047 Reported By Mr Stewart that the programme content would be unchanged but there would be a different programme title.

15.048 Discussion Members expressed concern that the consultation with students did not indicate unanimous support and that null responses were being considered as tacit agreement. The title change was not in itself

controversial but the student consultation would have to be revisited.

- 15.049 Resolved
1. That the programme team revisit the student consultation to ensure that there is agreement from all students.
  2. Subject to the above, the name change to be implemented from session 2016-17. (**ADLTQ SEBE/Programme Team**)

#### **SEBE – PROGRAMME CONCEPT PAPER**

- 15.050 Considered A concept paper for a programme MSc Oil and Gas Innovation (APC15/13/1).
- 15.051 Reported By Mr Stewart that the proposal was to join a consortium of Universities to deliver an MSc programme in order to satisfy a demand identified by the Oil and Gas Innovation Centre (OGIC). The University of Aberdeen would be the lead institution and the intake across the consortium would be 30 SFC funded places.
- 15.052 Discussion Members agreed that they needed more information on the proposed consortium, the respective responsibilities of partners and the potential benefits to the University for being involved.
- The proposal would have to be considered within the normal quality assurance procedures for collaborative activity so consultation with Quality Enhancement would be the logical first step.
- 15.053 Resolved
1. That more background is provided on the consortium proposal.
  2. That the Department of Quality Enhancement is consulted on the appropriate steps in developing any arrangement.
  3. That there is clearer delineation of the collaborative process and the academic content in subsequent proposal document. (**ADLTQ SEBE/HoD MEEE**)

#### **NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2015**

- 15.007 Received An overview of the results of the 2015 National Student Survey (APC15/11/1).

#### **LEARNING AND TEACHING SUBCOMMITTEE**

- 15.008 Received
1. Confirmed minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2015 (LTSC14/61/1).
  2. Confirmed minutes of the meeting held on June 2015 (LTSC14/72/1).

#### **ADMISSIONS SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES**

- 15.008 Received Confirmed minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2014 (ASC14/2/A1).